

REMARKS

Interview Summary

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for considering the issues raised in the April 18 Office Action during the interview on May 26. During the interview, the Examiner and Applicants' attorney discussed Christin et al. and the basis for the Examiner's § 102 rejection. The Examiner's § 112 rejections were also discussed. The remainder of the substance of the interview is further reflected below. Applicants believe the application is now in a condition for allowance and appreciate the Examiner's due consideration of the amendments above and the following comments.

Drawing Objections / 35 U.S.C. § 112 Rejections

The Examiner has argued the claimed "passageway," "upper hole," "lower hole," and "plate" should be identified more precisely in the specification. In response, Applicants have amended to the specification to indicate where embodiments of the claimed features are described. It should be kept in mind that these are exemplary embodiments of the claimed invention. The claims, however, are not limited to the specific structures described.

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

Claims 24-25, 28-39 and 43-44 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) by Christin et. al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,904,957). In response to the Examiner's comments, Applicants have amended claims 24-25, 38 and 41. Claims 28 and 43-45 have been cancelled to expedite prosecution. Applicants believe that the amended claims clearly distinguish over the prior art.

Christin et. al. does not disclose the structure claimed by Applicants. The invention of Christen et al. is shown in Figure 2. (Col. 5, lines 45-47). Christen et al. explains the structure that is used to diffuse gas through the furnace as follows:

The preheated gas coming from the diffuser plate 22 is channelled towards the volume constituted by the interior passages 31 of the stacks 30. To this end, the blocks 25 between the diffuser plate 22 and the bottom support tray 15a are constituted by rings of diameter equal to or slightly greater than the diameter of the holes 15 and they are in alignment therewith so that the gas is directed exclusively into the passages 31. The

diffuser plate 22 is provided with perforations 22a solely in register with the passages 31. [Col. 6, lines 49-57.]

Thus, in Christen et. al., the gas is directed only towards the center opening region of the stack of preforms. The disadvantages of this structure are explained in Applicants' specification at page 2, line 28 to page 3, line 12.

Applicants have amended the claims to clarify that an inlet opening and a passageway are located adjacent one end of a center opening region of a stack of porous structures. The inlet opening passes a first portion of gas to the center opening region. The passageway passes a second portion of gas to an outer region. Christin et. al. does not disclose this structure because in Christin et. al. all of the gas passes to the center opening region.

Accordingly, because the prior art of record does not disclose all of the limitations of Applicants' claims, the Examiner should withdraw the § 102 rejections.

35 U.S.C. § 103 Claim Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 37, 41-42 and 45 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) by Christin et. al. The Examiner has also rejected claim 35 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) by Christin et. al. in view of Porter (U.S. Patent No. 5,626,680). The Examiner has also rejected claim 40 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) by Christin et. al. in view of Jingbao (U.S. Patent No. 6,403,491) and Porter. The Examiner has also rejected claim 26 as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) by Christin et. al. in view of Laxman (U.S. Patent No. 6,450,117) and Porter.

Each of these claims depend from claim 24. As explained above, claim 24 is allowable because the prior art of record does not disclose all of the limitations of claim 24. Accordingly, all of the claims depending from claim 24 are also allowable because these claims incorporate all of the limitations of claim 24. Any further arguments that could be made at this time in support of Applicants' dependent claims would be superfluous and unnecessary. Therefore, the Examiner should withdraw the § 103 rejections.

Conclusion

In response to the Examiner's rejections and comments, Applicants have amended the specification, amended claims 24-25, 38 and 41, and cancelled claims 28 and 43-45. Applicants believe the claims as presented are now in condition for allowance. Applicants appreciate the Examiner's consideration of the amendments set forth above and Applicants' comments concerning the prior art.

Accordingly, Applicants request reconsideration and allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,



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